of the various labour laws for the welfare of labour including labourers employed in the salt industry is the responsibility of the Labour Department of the respective State Governments. Office of the Salt Commissioner, an attached office of this Department is supplementing efforts of the State- Govenrment by extending financial assistance to execute various labour welfare schemes such as educational facitlties for the children of workers, health check up, construction of labour rest sheds, water supply schemes, labour housing, provision of Community Centres/recreation facilities and audio-visual aids for improving skills in production of Salt/ Quality control etc. Office of the Salt Commissioner also extends financial assistance to the salt works affected by natural calamities by way of granting relief in the form of *ex-gratia* grant and loans for rehabilitation.

During the last three years, office of the Salt Commission has extended financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 42.79 lakhs on the Labour Welfare Schemes.

(c) The Code of Principles formulated by the Government for extending financial assistance for execution of the development and labour welfare works in the salt factories accords priority for the execution of Labour Welfare Schemes. State Governments and the Salt producers have also been advised to sponsor more schemes for the welfare of the labourers.

Decline in coffee export

1383. DR. ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether country's Coffee exports have gone down during 2001 -2002;

(b) if so, the reaction therefor; and

(c) the action proposed to be taken to boost export of India Coffee?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI): (a) and (b) Due to low prices of coffee prevailing in the international market and also increase in the domestic consumption of coffee from 60,000 MT to 70,000 MT, there has been a decline in coffee exports from India during 2001-2002 as compared to the previous years.

(c) To boost Indian coffee exports as well as to maximise export earnings, the Coffee Board is implementing a medium term export strategy during the current plan period.The key initiatives identified in the strategy to improve coffee exports from India are as under:—

— Shifting product mix in favor of Arabica.

— Cost reduction to improve competitiveness.

— Improving quality perception of Indian coffee.

— Integrating Indian coffee with the global coffee trade.

— Guarantee reliability of exporters.

— Carryout a major communication initiative in key overseas markets to enhance the image of Indian coffee as well as to improve market share.

— Participation in important overseas trade fairs involving exporters and grower exporters.

— Organising buyer-seller meets between Indian exporters and overseas buyers in key markets.

— Hosting visits of roaster/buyer delegation from leading consuming countries to Indian coffee tracks and facilitating interaction with the industry representatives.

— Organising "cupping" of Indian coffees by international coffee experts to evaluate and propagate the finer attributes of Indian coffees.

— Institution of Export awards to encourage exporters.

Competitiveness of industrial groups

†1384. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to take steps to make industrial groups more competitive at the international level;

(b) if so, whether Government have taken any steps in this regard;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.